

## BLACKWATER RIVER

RETURN to an Order of the House of Commons,  
dated 14 March 1831.—*for*,

COPIES " of the REPORT and PLANS received at the ADMIRALTY during the present Year, from Commander *Fraser*, R. N., on the Subject of the Navigation and Weirs of the River BLACKWATER."

### WEIRS IN THE RIVER BLACKWATER.

Sir,

Waterford, 25 January 1831.

I HAVE the honour to inform you, that, in fulfilment of the instructions conveyed in your letter of the 7th instant, I at once proceeded to Youghal, whither the "*Sparrow*" had been sent to meet me, by order of Rear-Admiral Dixon, and from thence up the Blackwater, where, having made such examination and inquiry as I deemed necessary, and having with me my recent survey of the river to facilitate my doing so, I am enabled to offer the following opinions for their Lordships' information.

Before entering upon the subject of the fishing Weirs, which I am more particularly called upon to do, I would beg leave to give, as concisely as possible, a general view of the Blackwater River, touching its capabilities, &c. The river may be said to commence at the harbour of Youghal, where it discharges itself into the sea, from whence, up to the mouth of the Bride, a distance of 11 miles, there is not eight feet at low water; and having a rise at spring tides of 13 feet, facility is offered to vessels of considerable burthen to proceed so far: formerly as many as 10 and 12 vessels have been lying there at one time, employed in the exportation of corn. Within the portion of the river here alluded to, the depths vary, there being in some parts of it from 20 to 30, and even 40, feet at low water.

From the mouth of the Bride up to Cappoquin there is much less water: besides which, there are several shoals and banks, some the natural effects of the river scour, others caused by artificial obstructions, as will be hereafter shown. The first of these are composed of a soft alluvial deposit, the others of sand and gravel, all, however, capable of removal by dredging. Above Cappoquin and on to Lismore, a distance of nearly four miles, the water is, in many places, very shallow, especially the upper portion of it, where there are beds of gravel and shingle, over which the stream rushes with great rapidity, causing rapids and overfalls. To overcome these difficulties, and enable barges, &c. to proceed up to the mills opposite Lismore, a canal has been constructed along the north shore, which is entered by a lock, a short distance below the rapids.

I may here remark, that, with an extension of half-a-mile more canal, and an additional lock, the upper part of the river, which is now cut off from all water-borne traffic, could be made available to navigation.

On entering on the subject of the fishing Weirs, I beg first to state, that between Youghal and Cappoquin, a distance of 16 miles, there are no less than 33 Weirs, 14 of these on the left bank of the river, 15 on the right, and four below the wooden bridge near Youghal; of this number, some are large, some small, some open, more close, but all more or less injurious to the river, and, in my humble opinion, injurious also to the salmon fishery. First, as touching their effects to navigation: many of them extend one-third, and some nearly half way across the river; and in consequence of their obstructions to the free flow of the current, and consequent deposit induced by their eddies, low water has extended to their extremities: some, as those near

near and above Dromana, extending obliquely across the river, have so completely intercepted all matter carried down by the freshes, as to have caused the formation of sand and gravel banks, which dry at low water. Some of these Weirs, I am informed, are in disuse; but portions of the poles being still remaining, their injurious effects are continued, besides presenting dangerous obstacles to barges, &c. passing up and down the river. The upper and most formidable Weir, and not included in the above number, is situated above the bridge at Lismore; it is a complete stone barrier, extending across the river, having in it several sluices and traps, and cutting off all water intercourse with the upper part of the river.

I have already in a former Report remarked upon the destructive effects of the style of Weir in use in the Blackwater River, many of them being so closed up with wicker-work as to make it scarce possible for even a sprat to escape. In these Weirs enormous quantities of small fish are taken each successive tide, a great proportion of which are doubtless of the salmon species, which, I conceive, must account in some degree for that great scarcity of salmon so much complained of on this coast the last few seasons.

To sum up, therefore, these observations in a few words, my opinion is, that all permanent or standing Weirs are more or less injurious to river navigation, some, of course, more than others; and that closed-up ones, such as are above alluded to, tend to the serious injury of the salmon fishery, and are, therefore, altogether decidedly objectionable.

I have, &c.

(signed) *George Alexander Fraser,*  
Commander.

Rear-Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, K. C. B.,  
&c. &c. &c.







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the Admiralty during the present Year, from  
Commander Fraser, R. N., on the Subject of  
the NAVIGATION and WEIRS of the River  
*Blackwater*.

(*Mr. Anstey.*)

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